

Southeast Atlantic Gillnet Fishery

Fishing gear type: Gillnet

Current category: Category II*

Basis for current classification on the LOF: Based on analogy to other Atlantic gillnet fisheries that use similar gear and operate in a similar manner to this fishery. Also, based on a 2001 recommendation by the Atlantic Scientific Review Group (SRG) to elevate all gillnet fisheries to Category II (unless there is evidence to the contrary).

Current list of marine mammal species/stocks injured/killed: Bottlenose dolphin, Southern Migratory coastal; Bottlenose dolphin, GA coastal; Bottlenose dolphin, Central FL coastal; Bottlenose dolphin, Northern FL coastal; Bottlenose dolphin, SC coastal.

Estimated number of current participants: 779

Take Reduction Teams/Plans that affect this fishery: Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP), 50 CFR 229.32; Bottlenose Dolphin Take Reduction Plan (BDTRP), 50 CFR 229.35.

Year added to the LOF: 2001

Category when originally listed: Category II

Basis for original classification on the LOF: This fishery was created by combining the Florida portion of the Category III "FL east coast, Gulf of Mexico pelagics king and Spanish mackerel gillnet fishery" and the shad component of the previous Category III "Southeast U.S. Atlantic coastal shad, sturgeon gillnet fishery." These components were combined because of new information on the more extensive use of stable (or sink) nets, and the Florida ban on the use of gillnets in state waters resulted in a redistribution of gillnet fishing effort into Federal waters.

The fishery was immediately elevated to Category II based on analogy with other gillnet fisheries. The Atlantic SRG recommended all gillnet fisheries be elevated to Category II (unless there is evidence to the contrary), and a review of stranding records from 1994-1998 should be conducted. A tier analysis was performed (based on stranding data in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida), finding that from 1994-1998, 44 dolphins died in fishery interactions, 5 with evidence of possible gillnet interactions. This was an average of 1 animal/year, which was 4% of the stock's Potential Biological Removal (PBR=25) level. This fishery was listed by analogy because, while the stranding data provided information on bottlenose dolphin interactions with gillnet gear that could be used in a tier analysis, the stranding data could not show which specific gillnet fishery caused the mortality in each case.

Estimated number of participants when originally listed: 779

Past names, if any: None.

Gear description/method for fishing: This fishery uses gillnets set in sink, stab, set, or strike fashion.

Target species: This fishery targets finfish including, but not limited to: king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, whiting, bluefish, pompano, spot, croaker, little tunny, bonita, jack crevalle, cobia, and striped mullet.

* The fishery is classified by analogy to other gear types or fisheries that are known to cause mortality or serious injury of marine mammals.

Spatial/temporal distribution of effort: This fishery operates in waters south of a line extending due east from the North Carolina/South Carolina border and south and east of the fishery management council demarcation line between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. The majority of fishing effort occurs in Federal waters because South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida prohibit the use of gillnets, with limited exceptions, in state waters. This fishery does not include gillnet effort targeting sharks, which are a target species of the “Southeastern U.S. Atlantic shark gillnet fishery.”

Levels of observer coverage each year[†]: The Shark Gillnet Observer Program Observer Program is mandated under the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fisheries Management Plan (FMP), the ALWTRP (50 CFR Part 229.32), and the Biological Opinion under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Observers are deployed on any active fishing vessel reporting shark drift gillnet effort. In 2005, this program also began to observe sink gillnet fishing for sharks along the southeastern U.S. coast. The observed fleet includes vessels with an active directed shark permit and fish with sink gillnet gear. Between 2001 and 2005, an annual average of 74 drift sets, 40 strike sets, and 241 sink sets targeting sharks were reported and/or observed. The number of drift sets has been declining steadily while the number of strike sets has been increasing. During 2006, there were 8 drift sets, 40 strike sets, and 301 sink sets targeting sharks reported or observed. However, there is direct evidence of under-reporting as some observed sets were not reported to the FLS system, and the total effort remains highly uncertain. In 2007, a total of 85 drift net sets were observed with 4 of those targeting sharks and the remainder Spanish mackerel. A total of 112 sink net sets were observed, with 60 of those targeting sharks and the remainder targeting various fish species. No strike sets were observed in 2007.

Management and regulations: Fishing for king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, cobia, cero, and little tunny in Federal waters is managed under the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources FMP. None of the other target species are Federally managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. In state waters, state and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Interstate FMPs apply. The fishery is also subject to BDTRP and ALWTRP implementing regulations (because of the potential for interactions with North Atlantic right whales in the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area).

History of Changes on the LOF

2011 LOF: Updated the stock name for bottlenose dolphins killed/injured in this fishery, based on the revised stock structure presented in the final 2008 and 2009 SARs. Replaced bottlenose dolphin (WNA coastal) with the following stocks: bottlenose dolphin (Southern Migratory coastal); bottlenose dolphin (GA coastal); bottlenose dolphin (Central FL coastal); bottlenose dolphin (Northern FL coastal); and bottlenose dolphin (SC coastal).

2008 LOF:

- Removed shad from the list of target species. A total closure of the ocean intercept fishery for American shad was implemented January 1, 2005.
- Clarified that the fishery is also managed under the ALWTRP implementing regulations.

2006 LOF:

- Expanded the listed target species in this fishery to include: king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, whiting, bluefish, pompano, spot, croaker, little tunny, bonita, jack crevalle, and cobia. The additions were based on 2002-2005 landings from gillnet fisheries in Florida.
- Added a superscript “2” in Table 2 after this fishery, indicating that the fishery is categorized by analogy.

^{† †} Observer coverage levels include the latest information reported in the most current final Stock Assessment Report (SAR).